

MEASURING THE EXTENT OF PATIENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE QUALITY OF SERVICES OFFERED BY DENTISTS IN IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

This study aims towards measuring the level of patient satisfaction with the dentist's services, then design a study model which includes six dimension, first five of those dimensions include the quality of service elements which are reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles, while the sixth dimension measures patient satisfaction.

Two kinds of hypotheses were developed; the first included the first six dimensions regarding the study model, while the second regards the existence of a connection between the contents of this model.

Designing and development of the questionnaire included 30 questions which have been distributed amongst patients visiting dentists in Baghdad / Iraq, 203 valid answers have been obtained which were liable for statistical analysis and have been analysed for this study.

All six hypotheses regarding the first kind were accepted, the statistical analysis showed a positive and incorporeal correlating relationship between all the study model's contents, this indicates the acceptance of the seventh hypotheses, and that the strongest relationship between the first dimension (reliability) and patient satisfaction is established by the correlation factor, meanwhile the strongest relationship between the study model's contents was established between the first dimension (reliability) and the second dimension (assurance).

The analysis of the dimensions showed that the value of the fifth dimension (tangibles) was the highest with a (3.81) mean value and (16.62) T value, which is relatable as tangibles (equipment, appliances, individuals, the clinic...) have a great influence over patients at a dentist's clinic.

KEYWORDS: Quality Services, Satisfaction, Patients, Dentists, Quality Elements

INTRODUCTION

The term "satisfaction" is widely used in the business field, especially in marketing, as it indicates the measuring of individuals acceptance to whatever being offered to them (services or products alike) in a way that achieves an understanding that exceeds what was expected of the service or product, meaning that the difference between what is expected to be offered and what is in reality being offered (AlSamyda and Rudania 2006) when you define satisfaction as a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations, and additionally suggests that the degree of customer satisfaction is the key to the success of the marketing strategy.

Many studies and researches handled satisfaction especially customer satisfaction regarding many aspects (products, services, individuals...), such studies regarding services, regardless of their sort, including medical services provided in hospitals occupied a huge portion of these studies. Regarding quality of service provided by dentists, such study is very rare in Iraq if not inexistent.

This study aims towards knowing patient satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the dentist through the implementation of service standards agreed upon by many researchers like (Zeithman and Binter 2000), (Parasuraman Zeithman and berry 1985), who have limited the quality of service in five elements which are reliability, assurance, empathy, responsiveness, and tangibles, which are employed to measure patient satisfaction. These five dimensions were introduced in this study model to measure their effect on patient satisfaction with what is being provided by dentists towards their patients as dental care is of great importance and effect to the whole being of a person.

Measuring patient satisfaction within the subject of quality of dentist services is quite important to both the patient and the dentist as it helps in improving the quality of the services and their precision, which will be positively reflected upon both sides equally the patients' and the doctors' and eventually the health of general public.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study focuses on knowing the extent of patients satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the dentist

- What is the extent of patients' satisfaction with the quality of services provided by the dentist?
- What is the extent of patients' satisfaction with the reliability of the service (ability to perform the promised service with confidence and reliability) which is provided by the dentist?
- What is the extent of patients' satisfaction with the quality of service assurance (regarding security, honesty, and trust) which is provided by the dentist?
- What is the extent of patients satisfaction with the quality of service sympathy (accessible, good communication, understanding, and attention to their beneficiaries) which is provided by the dentist?
- What is the extent of patients satisfaction with the service quality's responsiveness (willingness to help beneficiaries and provide prompt service) which is provided by the dentist?
- What is the extent of patients' satisfaction with the quality of tangibles service (physical facilities, equipment, and workers) which is provided by the dentist?

STUDY OBJECTIVES

This study aims to:

- Define the role of the dimensions of the service quality provided by the dentist on the satisfaction of patients
- Identifying which one of the quality dimensions of service provided by the dentist is more influential on patient satisfaction

STUDY MODEL

The study model is based on the dimensions of the service quality that has been identified by (Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithman, 1985)

Satisfaction model presented by (AlSamydaï Mahmood, Rudaina Othman, and Suaad Abdulfattah Albairooti, 2006) which depends on the actual performance of the service (the level of patient satisfaction achieved), the expected level of performance (the level of need to obtain service). (Rudaina Othman Yousif and Suaad Abdulfattah Albairooti, 2014) Measure the extent of patient satisfaction for the quality of banking services offered by Iraqi commercial banks (government and private in Baghdad).

Secondly, the level of patient satisfaction with the medical service quality provided by dentists

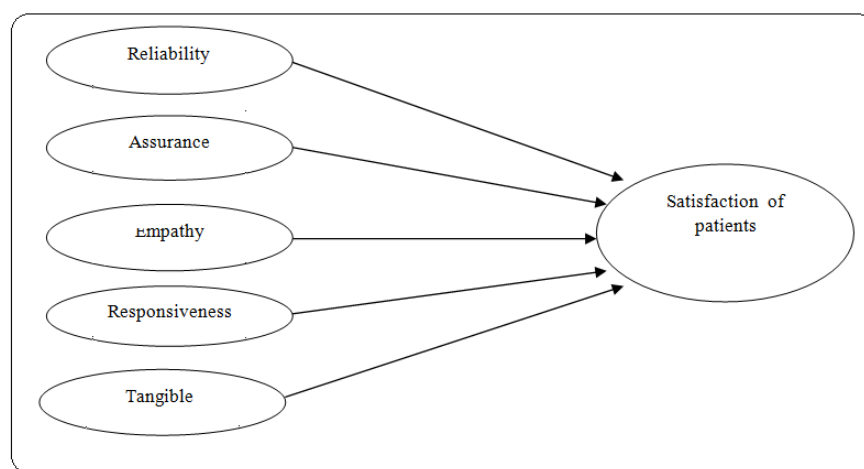


Figure 1: Study Model

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focuses on the knowledge of the impact of the quality of services provided by dentists on patient satisfaction, so it will be addressed to the quality of service and satisfaction and literature review

Service Quality

Service quality is determined by the total utility received by the beneficiary of the service. This represents the benefits package that the beneficiary receives from the core and supplementary services. The patient assesses the service quality by comparing his perceived mental image of the service which he constituted from information obtained via promotions, personal experiences, and the experiences of friends, family and all those around him, with the level of satisfaction that he receives. As failing to achieve the required satisfaction will prompt patients to abstain from requiring the service and to require services provided by the competition, service quality is correlated with the organization's service capability of achieving a level of patient satisfaction that surpasses his expectations (AlSamydaï and Rudaina, 2005).

(Dee, 2009) Indicates that the concept of service quality is centered around the benefits obtained by the patient provided the service, while (Berry et al, 1995) find that service quality depends on the current and past experiences of the patient with the services that benefited him, which is the main principle in evaluating the service based on the perceived quality of the service.

The patients make a comparison between the quality they wish to receive and what they actually get as indicated by (Gefen 2002), many researchers suggest the importance of service quality in multiple fields as a critical factor influencing satisfaction as in the researches of (Gronroos, 2001), (Hume and Mort 2008), (Lovelock and Wirtz 2007).

To conclude the service quality in medical field including the dental line is an important factor asked by the patients to obtain a high quality medical services thus it affects the patients' satisfaction.

According to (Parasuraman, Zeithman and Berry 1988) the five dimensions of service quality are:

- Reliability

Indicates the precision of dentists service provided in accordance to what is needed, and the level of reliance on the performance or achievement on the patient's side.

- Assurance

Indicates the possibility, ability, and the information of the dentist which directs trust and safety in the patient.

- Empathy

It goes back to the care and concentration of the dentist which is individually based on meeting the patient's needs and the dealing with the service provision.

- Responsiveness

The dentists' readiness and ability to provide the service in a timely manner with high efficiency adding to it the level of help offered to the patient.

- Tangibles

Which includes materialistic accessories supporting the provision of services (equipment, appliances, and individuals

Satisfaction

The term patient satisfaction is utilized in signifying the patient's feelings towards the organization and its services. (Paul et al, 2010) Indicate that patient satisfaction can be defined as ' the number of patients, or percentage of total patients, whose reported experience with a clinic, its products, or its services (ratings) exceeds specified satisfaction goals. While (Kotler, 2006) defines satisfaction as: a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a services's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations, and additionally suggests that the degree of patient satisfaction is the key to the success of the marketing strategy. (AlSamyda and Rudaina, 2006) Argue that suggesting that the degree of satisfaction represents the difference between what the service achieves regarding the satisfaction of the patient after acquiring it and benefiting from it, and what he had expected to benefit from it before acquiring it. The more the patient satisfaction meets or surpasses the raised need, the higher the degree of satisfaction. Therefore, patient satisfaction of services is achieved by the supplication of core and supplementary services that are to his satisfaction, which is only accomplished through the organizations' accurate identification of the needs and desires of the patients and working to meet them (Alsamydai and Rudaina, 2003).

The patient visits the dentist in order to acquire the service of treating or fixing his/her teeth, accordingly the patient chooses his dentist in the light of the dentist's service quality which is thought to be the best for the patient at the time in accordance to the health service dimensions considered.

The study of (Syed et al 2014) indicate that The patients treated by the dental students at college of dentistry were highly satisfied with their treatment. Also the he results of the study by (Wedad et al 2003) indicated that the majority of the patients satisfied with the facilities, services and treatment received at the Dental College clinics of King Saud University.

According to the study of (Mohamed and Tamer 2012) the majority of patients were satisfied with the patient–dentist interaction, technical competency, administrative efficiency and clinic set up environment at the dental clinics of the College of Dentistry at Taibah University. In addition the study of (Fellaniet et al 2011) is an examination for the two dimensions of SERVQUAL model indicated that the three highest gap scores in predicting patient satisfaction evaluation were response by administration staff related to long waiting time followed by dental assistant's knowledge about patient's needs during treatment and communication related to explanation for the treatment that was given by dentist. On the other hand, the least gap obtained from the data are dental assistant's ability in assisting the dentist followed by dentist's knowledge about the patient's need and ability of the dentist to help and instill confidence in the patient about the treatment.

(Hashim.R 2005) aimed in his study to determine the patient satisfaction with the dental care provided at the Faculty of Dentistry at Ajman University, Most were satisfied with the care provided except for explanation of treatment options and the remoteness of the clinic. Measuring level of satisfaction is an important factor towards improving the service provided and should be monitored regularly.

The research of (Atiq 2012) aims to study the reality of the quality of health services in the public institution Aalsnschwaúah saide to Walah and how Taterhaaly patient satisfaction, relying on the quality of health services dimensions, this study was able to reach the patient satisfaction four dimensions(reliability, responsiveness, security, compassion), but he is not satisfied after the tangibility. The study of Balhamsa focused to the d dental surgeons interested in the application and the provision of quality dimensions. when their patients receive health benefits.

The evaluation of the level of this application by the patients was positive, taking into account there is a relativity in the importance of factors among dentists and patients in their assessments of the quality of health services.

STUDY HYPOTHESES

Based on the study's model, there are many hypotheses acquired to reach the goals of this study, and they are:

- First Group

Reliability factory effects the patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.

Assurance factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.

Empathy factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.

Responsiveness factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.

Tangibles factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.

Service quality with its five factors effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.

- **Second Group**

There is a relationship between the ingredients of a research model (reliability, assurance, empathy, responsiveness, and tangibles) and patient's satisfaction with the services provided by the dentist.

METHODOLOGY

Data Source

This study utilized two types of data sources necessary to implement this study.

- **Secondary Sources:** which are related to data and information obtained from the existing literature and previous studies related to the topic of the research in order to advance our understanding and assist in developing the study's model as well as the questionnaire's design and development
- **Primary Source:** the researcher I association with experts in marketing and statistics developed a questionnaire consisting of 30 questions divided on six dimensions and then the questionnaire was distributed to 204 of the patients

The Scale and Dimension

The process of scaling is an essential tool in almost every marketing research situation (Malhotra et al., 2004) and is most commonly used for assessing how people feel or think about objects or constructs (Neuman, 2003). Having taking into consideration the criteria for selecting a scaling technique, for example, information needed by the study and the characteristics of the respondents as well as the mode of administration (Alvin et al, 2003), the five point Likert scale was chosen for the current study. Therefore, all the local constructs of the current study were measured on a five point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree, agree, Neutral, disagree, strongly disagree)

In addition, this study was divided into six dimensions relating to the different components of the model of the study.

Dimension (1): Reliability

Dimension (2): Assurance

Dimension (3): Empathy

Dimension (4): Responsiveness

Dimension (5): Tangibles

Dimension (6): Satisfaction

Analyzing Method

Several statistic techniques were used including Cronbach's alpha, frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, one-sample t-test. The t-test was used to accept /reject the hypothesis (group) through testing the average mean of single sample, based on the value of scale midpoint, the higher the value the more favorable the attitude, and the vice versa. A midpoint equal to 3 was chosen by adding the lower coded value of the Likert scale (1) and the upper code (5) of the Likert scale all were used the spearman's correlation coefficient for testing the hypotheses (groups).

Impact Factor (JCC): 4.9926

Index Copernicus Value (ICV): 3.0

RESULTS

Test of Reliability

A reliability coefficient of (Cronbach's' Alpha) 70% or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research. The result of this test in the current study is 76% as table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases	Cronbach's 'Alpha	N of Items
203	.76	30

General Results

By using descriptive analysis it was determined that the mean of all questions are over the midpoint (3) except the questions 4, 12, this results show in table 2

Table 2: General Results

No.	Study Dimensions	Mean	Std	T Value	Sig
	First Dimension: Reliability				0.000
1	Dentist show real interest in solving patient health issues	3.19	1.35	2.07	0.000
2	The dentist offers medical services in accordance with the promises made to the patient	3.45	1.03	6.21	0.000
3	Patients receive medical services in the quality they expected which enforces their confidence in the dentist	3.91	0.93	13.92	0.000
4	Dentist's assistants help install confidence in patients	2.91	1.12	-1.12	0.000
5	Dentist provides good health service to patients from the first visit	4.14	1.07	15.20	0.000
6	The dentist works on enforcing a good relationship with the patient	3.97	.095	14.49	0.000
7	The dentist deals with reliability towards patients	3.19	.98	2.84	0.000
	Second Dimension: Assurance				
8	When patients face a problem, the dentist shows real interest	3.44	.95	6.68	0.000
9	The patient feels safe and secure when dealing with the dentist	3.64	.94	9.64	0.000
10	The dentist is honest in his dealing with the patients	3.45	1.09	5.92	0.000
11	The dentist has a good reputation which is a relief to patients	3.28	.98	4.11	0.000
	Third Dimension: Empathy				
12	The dentist has enough information to answer patients questions and inquiries	2.97	1.15	0.36	0.000
13	The dentist shows great interest in patients	3.81	1.35	8.60	0.000
14	The dentist understands patients requests and responds to them.	3.42	1.21	5.03	0.000
15	Patients get specified details and information on the services the dentist is providing	3.27	1.30	3.01	0.000

Table 2:Contd.,					
16	The dentist communicates in a comprehensible manner with the patient	3.12	1.30	1.20	0.000
Fourth Dimension: Responsiveness					
17	The dentist offers his medical services to patients instantaneously	3.47	1.42	4.78	0.000
18	The dentist responds to patients requests	4.10	1.17	13.47	0.000
19	The dentist helps the patient readily	4.06	1.16	13.01	0.000
20	The dentist answers all patients questions and inquiries with preciseness and quickness	3.98	1.07	13.07	0.000
Fifth Dimension: Tangibles					
21	The dentist uses modern equipments and machines in offering medical services	3.93	.89	14.97	0.000
22	The clinic environment is appealing	3.95	1.04	13.08	0.000
23	The dentist and his assistants are presentable	3.80	.95	11.98	0.000
24	The internal decoration of the clinic is appealing	3.59	1.31	6.40	0.000
25	The dentists clinic is spacious and comfortable	3.77	1.56	7.07	0.000
Sixth Dimension: Satisfaction					
26	Credibility and authenticity has a great impact on patients satisfaction regarding the dentist's service quality	3.15	.90	2.48	0.000
27	The assurance effect (safety, honesty) on the patient satisfaction with the medical service quality provided by the dentist	3.08	.90	1.35	0.000
28	Sympathy effect (accessible, good communication, understanding patients, and attention to their beneficiaries) on the patient satisfaction with the medical service quality provided by the dentist	3.32	.89	5.19	0.000
29	Responsiveness effect (willingness to help beneficiaries and provide prompt service) on the patient satisfaction with the medical service quality provided by the dentist	3.17	.85	2.95	0.000
30	Tangibles effect (physical facilities, equipment, and workers) on the patient satisfaction with the medical service quality provided by the dentist	3.15	.95	2.34	0.000

Testing Hypothesis

The first Category: test results of first set of hypothesis of the study are shown in table 3, statistical analysis of this table illustrates the overall mean score of respondent which measures the dimensions (D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, and D6) that correspond to the first hypotheses. The mean values of these are (H1=3.54, H2=3.45, H3=3.32 10.66, H4=3.90, H5=3.81, and H6=3.18). These values are above the scale midpoint (3) with the standard deviation showing small dispersion this mean moreover. These result were further validated by one sample t-test, which revealed that the overall mean difference for these dimensions as whole was statistically significant (N=0.000) at (Ns=0.05) with height T-value (H1=13.84, H2=9.47, H3=6.09, H4=15.81, H5=16.62, and H6=3.55) these scores are bigger than tabular (tabular t= 1.96). As a result of the six hypotheses are accepted, this results show in the table 3

Table 3: The Results of First Set of Hypothesis

The Hypothesis	Test Value=3			
	Mean Score	Std	T Value	s. g N
H1: Reliability factory effects the patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist	3.54	.55	13.846	0.000
H2: Assurance factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist	3.45	.68	9.47	0.000
H3: Empathy factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.	3.32	.75	6.09	0.000
H4: Responsiveness factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.	3.90	.81	15.81	0.000
H5: Tangibles factor effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.	3.81	.69	16.62	0.000
H6: Service quality with its five factors effects patient's satisfaction with the service provided by the dentist.	3.18	.72	3.55	0.000

The second Category: It test the constructs of the study model. In order to test the relationship between the components of the study model, Pearson's' correlation coefficient was adopted and hypothesis (H7) was developed. There is a significant relationship between the constructs of study' model (reliability, assurance, Empathy, Responsiveness, Tangibles) with the satisfaction of patients results of the analysis of Pearson's correlation coefficient are shown in the table 4

Table 4: The Constructs of the Study Model Using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

Dimension	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
D1	1 0.000					
D2	.378** 0.000	1 0.000				
D3	.242** 0.000	.303** 0.000	1 0.000			
D4	.159** 0.000	.298** 0.000	.193** 0.000	1 0.000		
D5	0.374** 0.000	.328** 0.000	.086** 0.000	.322** 0.000	1 0.000	
D6	.245** 0.000	.181** 0.000	.163** 0.000	.211** 0.000	.145** 0.000	1 0.000

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aims towards measuring patient satisfaction with the quality of service provided by dentists through measuring different dimensions relating to the quality of service, for that a study model has been developed which included many elements relating to the quality of service and satisfaction. These elements were divided into six dimensions which included reliability, assurance, empathy, responsiveness, tangibles, and finally satisfaction.

Two kinds of hypotheses were developed in light of the study model and literature reviews for the testing of this study. The first kind of hypotheses included six hypotheses in total relating to the dimensions of the quality of service and

satisfaction which covers the study model. The second kind was related to measuring a correlation factor between all the ingredients of the study model to define the correlation factor between these elements.

All answers of the study sample on the questionnaire questions, which were 30 in total, were positive except questions 4 and 12. Question 5 had the highest mean value of (4.14), followed by question 18 which had the mean value of (4.10), while the lowest mean value of (2.91) was obtained by question 4.

The analysis of the five dimensions clarified that the fifth dimension (tangibles) had the highest mean value of (3.81) and a T value of (16.62), this indicates that this dimension had the highest effect, while the fourth dimension (responsiveness) was second in effect with a mean value of (3.90) and a T value of (15.81), while the third dimension (empathy) came last with a mean value of (3.32) and a T value of (6.09).

The sixth dimension (satisfaction) it had the mean value of (3.18) and a T value of (3.55) which was higher than the T value of the table (1.96) which indicates the patient satisfaction with the services provided by the dentist. Meanwhile, regarding the correlation factor (Pearson correlation factor was used), all the relationships were positive and incorporeal from all dimensions of the study model as all five dimensions had positive and incorporeal relationships with the sixth dimension (satisfaction), the strongest relationship was between the first dimension (reliability) and patient satisfaction measured by correlation factor (.245) followed by the fourth dimension (responsiveness) and satisfaction measured by correlation factor (.211). The strongest relationship between all the components on the model was between the first dimension (reliability) and the second dimension (assurance) measured by a correlation factor value of (.378). This indicates the acceptance of the incorporeal correlation relationship between all the components of the study model.

All six of the study's hypotheses were accepted for having the T value for the six dimensions higher than the table T value.

This study represents one of the situations relating to the measuring of patient satisfaction with the quality of service provided by dentists as it can be relied upon as a base for future studies and researches in the field of dentist services.

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